

CLAIMS:

1. A system for controlling storage and distribution of money tills, the system comprising:

5 a housing substantially defining an interior space, the interior space being partitioned to provide a plurality of compartments, with each compartment operable to receive at least one of the money tills, there being at least one opening in the housing through which access to the compartments can be controlled;

an input device operable to accept input; and

10 a controller operable to control access to the compartments through the opening by receiving the input and comparing the input to stored information to generate one of a plurality of possible comparison results and, upon generating at least a particular one of the comparison results, to allow access to the compartment.

15 2. The system as set forth in claim 1, the housing presenting a front opening and a back opening, the controller controlling access through the front opening.

20 3. The system as set forth in claim 1, the system further comprising a plurality of doors hingedly mounted to the housing, with each door operable to open and close and thereby selectively restrict access to one of the compartments, and the controller being operable to open the doors to allow access to the compartments.

4. A system for controlling storage and distribution of money tills, the system comprising:

a cabinet having a front side and a back side and substantially defining an interior space partitioned to provide a plurality of compartments, with each compartment operable to receive at least one of the money tills, the cabinet including –

a front opening allowing access from the front side of the cabinet to at least one of the compartments,

a back opening allowing access from the back side of the cabinet to at least one of the compartments,

a plurality of doors hingedly mounted to the cabinet, with each door operable to open and close and thereby restrict access to a corresponding one of the compartments;

at least one input device operable to accept input; and

a computer coupled with the input device and with each door and operable to control access to the compartments by receiving the input and comparing the input to stored information to generate one of a plurality of possible comparison results and, upon generating at least a particular one of the comparison results, to open at least one of the doors.

5. The system as set forth in claim 4, the cabinet further comprising one or more rear doors hingedly mounted to the back side of the cabinet and lockable so to selectively restrict access to the compartments through the back opening.

6. The system as set forth in claim 4, at least one of the compartments being accessible only through the front opening.

7. The system as set forth in claim 4, at least one of the compartments including a presence sensor for detecting a presence of the money till received within the compartment and reporting the presence to the computer.

8. The system as set forth in claim 4, each money till being of a type, at least one of the compartments including a type sensor for detecting the type of the money till received within the compartment and reporting the type to the computer.

5 9. The system as set forth in claim 8, the type sensor being a bar code reader operable to determine the type from a bar code affixed to the money till.

10 10. The system as set forth in claim 4, the system further comprising a hand-held bar code reader operable to read information from a bar code affixed to each compartment and a bar code affixed to each money till and to report the information to the computer.

15 11. The system as set forth in claim 4, the cabinet further comprising one or more visual display devices mounted to the back side of the cabinet and operable to visually communicate a status of the compartment and a status of the money till received within the compartment.

20 12. The system as set forth in claim 4, the input device being selected from the group consisting of keypads, keyboards, fingerprint readers, card readers, retina scanners, voice identifiers.

25 13. The system as set forth in claim 4, the system further comprising a visual display viewable from the front side of the cabinet and controlled by the computer to visually communicate information.

14. The system as set forth in claim 4, the system further comprising a printing device accessible from the front side of the cabinet and controlled by the computer to print messages.

30 15. The system as set forth in claim 4, the computer being further operable to graphically communicate information regarding a status of the compartment and a status of the money till received within the compartment.

16. The system as set forth in claim 4, the input including information sufficient to identify a particular employee, the computer being operable to record and store the input for subsequent recall.

5 17. The system as set forth in claim 4, the system further comprising a portable electronic signaling device useable by the computer to signal to a person that a condition has occurred.

10 18. The system as set forth in claim 17, the electronic remote signaling device being a pager.

15 19. The system as set forth in claim 4, the system further comprising at least one camera positioned to view the front side of the cabinet, the camera being electrically connected to a recording device operable to record the view of the camera.

20 20. The system as set forth in claim 19, the recording device being a video cassette recorder.

25 21. The system as set forth in claim 19, the recording device being the computer.

30 22. The system as set forth in claim 4, the cabinet being mounted through a wall so as to present the front side to a first area defined by the wall and to present the back side to a second area defined by the wall.

23. Source code for execution by a control component of a system for controlling storage and distribution of money tills, the system comprising at least one compartment operable to receive at least one of the money tills, and at least one input device operable to accept input, and the control component being coupled with the compartment and the input device and operable to control access to the compartment, the source code comprising:

- a first code segment operable to receive and store employee information, including authorization information;
- a second code segment operable to receive and store compartment status information and money till information;
- a third code segment operable to receive the input and compare the input to the stored employee information and stored compartment status and money till information to produce a comparison result; and
- a fourth code segment operable to control access to the compartment based upon the comparison result.

24. The source code as set forth in claim 23, the fourth code segment being operable to send signals to an opening mechanism of a compartment door to cause the door to open and allow access to the compartment.

25. The source code as set forth in claim 23, the compartment having a status and the money till having a type, the source code further comprising a fifth code segment operable to receive and cause to be graphically displayed the status of the compartment and type of the money till.

26. The source code as set forth in claim 23, further including a sixth code segment operable to detect and graphically communicate the occurrence of a condition.

27. The source code as set forth in claim 26, further comprising a seventh code segment operable to generate signals to audibly communicate the occurrence of the condition.

28. The source code as set forth in claim 26, further including an eighth code segment operable to generate signals to communicate via a portable electronic signaling device the occurrence of the condition.

5 29. A method of controlling storage and distribution of money tills, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a storage space for at least one of the money tills, with access to the storage space being controllable;
- (b) receiving and storing authorization data;
- 10 (c) accepting input data;
- (d) comparing the input data to the authorization data to produce one of a plurality of possible comparison results;
- (e) controlling access to the storage space based upon the comparison result; and
- 15 (f) recording and storing information including and related to the input data.

30. The method as set forth in claim 29, the information related to the input data including the time of accepting the input data.

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31. A method of controlling storage and distribution of money tills using a system comprising at least one compartment operable to receive at least one of the money tills, an input device operable to accept input data, and a controller operable to control access to the compartment, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) receiving and storing authorization information;
- (b) receiving and storing a compartment status for each compartment and a till type for each money till;
- (b) accepting the input data;
- (c) comparing the input data to the authorization information to generate at least one of a plurality of possible comparison results, with the possible comparison results including at least a first comparison result and a second comparison result;
- (d) allowing access to at least one of the compartments based upon generating the first comparison result;
- (e) disallowing access to at least one of the compartments based upon generating the second comparison result; and
- (f) recording and storing information, including the time of accepting the input data, with the information being referenced to the input data.

32. The method as set forth in claim 31, the information referred to in step (f) including the compartment status and till type.

33. The method as set forth in claim 31, further comprising the step of (g) detecting and communicating via a portable signaling device the occurrence of a condition.

34. The method as set forth in claim 33, the portable signaling device being a pager and the condition being a non-availability of a particular till type.